

Universal Mask Use Policy FAQs

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1. Why are we requiring universal mask use (procedure masks)?

Governor Inslee issued a statewide order directing all individuals to wear a face covering when they are unable to maintain 6 feet of physical distance from others. Wearing masks reduces exposure and transmission to COVID-19.

This masking policy aims to enhance:

- **Patient safety:** If an SCCA staff member has an asymptomatic infection or very mild symptoms of infection that are either hard to recognize or develop during their shift at work, the face mask can contain viral particles and decrease the risk to patients and to other staff in close proximity.
- **Workforce safety:** If an SCCA staff member comes into close contact with an individual (patient, visitor, staff) who either has no signs of infection or an unexpected respiratory symptoms in a patient not in droplet/contact isolation, these masks provide additional level of protection against infectious droplets from those individuals. Since it is difficult in many work environments to maintain 6 feet of separation, masks can provide additional protection while working in the clinic.

2. Why are we requiring a procedure mask and not an N95 respirator?

COVID-19 is thought to be transmitted primarily through droplets. A procedure mask provides protection by containing these droplets if someone has the virus and by preventing exposure to the virus if someone has close contact with another person who is infected. N95 respirators are used by nurses and providers caring for COVID-19 positive patients in the ICU and locations where aerosol generating procedures are common.

As a reminder, airborne/respirator/contact (with eye protection precautions) are only required while the patient is undergoing aerosol-generating procedures (e.g. intubation, nebulizer therapy). An N95 respirator is not required to prevent droplet transmission during routine care.

3. Does the Universal Mask Use policy apply to every member of the workforce working anywhere at SCCA?

YES. This policy applies to employees working in all SCCA buildings and premises, clinical and non-clinical locations (SCCA South Lake Union Campus, Evergreen Clinic, Issaquah Clinic, Overlake Clinic, Poulsbo Clinic).

For employees working in non-clinical locations:

- Cloth face coverings are recommended. If these employees visit buildings where clinical care is provided, the mask policy applies as above, and a procedure mask will be required while in clinic locations

- Employees who are not required to be in clinical spaces should not enter the clinic
- These employees should practice principles of physical distancing (separation by 6 feet whenever possible), respiratory etiquette and frequent hand hygiene
- These employees must wear facial protection (e.g. cloth masks) while in the non-clinical building
- Symptomatic employees should not come to work sick, even if not in the clinical environment. Employees should perform daily self-checks before coming to clinic to assure they have no symptoms of COVID-19. Those who have new onset symptoms should fill out the [employee health online survey](#) to undergo testing at the employee drive through/walk-up clinic.

4. What if I don't want to wear a procedure mask?

This policy applies to all SCCA personnel and is required. The requirement to wear a mask is part of Infection Prevention's transmission-based precautions. Similar to the requirement to use hand hygiene – wearing an extended-use mask is not optional.

5. What should I do if I develop a skin or breathing reaction to the procedure mask?

Please remove your mask, inform your supervisor or manager, complete an Accident Illness Report (AIR) and contact the employee health team. That team will investigate the potential reaction and, if appropriate, attempt to find an alternative mask made with different components.

6. Can I bring my own mask?

If you work at an SCCA clinical location, you may **not wear masks from home in the clinic**. SCCA will provide masks to all employees in our clinical areas. You are welcome to wear a cloth mask to and from work but must exchange for a procedure mask on arriving to the clinic.

If you work in SCCA non-clinical locations (e.g. administrative buildings), you must to wear a cloth face covering when within 6 ft of another person. You may wear a cloth face covering from home or a cloth mask supplied by SCCA.

7. Should all patients be wearing face masks?

YES. All patients entering SCCA facilities must wear their own cloth face covering when entering the healthcare facility. If they do not have a face cover or mask, one will be provided for them.

Symptomatic patients will be provided a procedure mask during front door screening and further evaluated. Once roomed, patients should continue to wear the face mask. The mask can be removed to perform a nose, mouth, or throat exam. Asymptomatic patients may choose to wear a mask they bring from home (e.g. cloth mask or scarf).

8. Should visitors be wearing face masks?

YES. Visitors must wear face masks or face coverings that they bring with them. If a visitor arrives without a mask, they will be given a procedure mask to wear. The visitor restriction policy limits visitors within our facilities. If a visitor develops symptoms while on the premises, that person should be provided a face mask and asked to leave.

9. I work in a procedural area. Can I wear a single procedure mask continuously, including across different cases?

YES. A single procedure mask can be worn across different patient cases. A mask must be changed, however, if it becomes wet or contaminated during a case. It is recommended that face shields be worn with masks in procedure areas.

10. Can I use my face mask between patients, including those with confirmed COVID-19, suspected COVID-19, other respiratory viruses or patients in whom none of these apply?

YES. Your face mask must be handled carefully to prevent both self-contamination and cross-contamination. Under conditions of universal use, a **full-face shield must be worn over the face mask when caring for patients in droplet/contact precautions as the form of eye protection and to reduce potential splatter to the mask.** Masks must be changed, however, if they become wet or contaminated.

11. I work in a clinical setting. How can I drink when I am supposed to wear a mask??

Drinking water or beverages are only permitted in designated areas. If you need to drink, ensure you are 6 feet away from others, perform hand hygiene, remove the mask, drink, and then replace your face mask. Always perform hand hygiene after replacing your mask and be cautious not to touch the front of your mask when placing it back on. See [How to safely put on, take off and reapply a mask](#) for instructions and pictures that show how to do this. This sign is posted in break rooms. You can also watch a video on [How to Safely Drink with a Mask](#).

12. How do I handle the mask when I'm ready to eat/drink during a break?

Eating is not permitted in clinical areas. On your break in a non-clinical area follow the steps below. You can also refer to [How to safely put on, take off and reapply a mask](#) for instructions and pictures that show how to do this. This sign is posted in break rooms.

Remove the mask:

1. Perform hand hygiene with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub
2. Prepare paper bag.
3. Remove the face mask by grabbing strings by ears and carefully removing mask from face.
4. Store mask carefully to avoid contamination to other surfaces.
5. Perform hand hygiene with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.

After you have finished eating or drinking, take the following steps to replace the mask:

1. Perform hand hygiene with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.
2. Remove mask carefully and don mask ensuring clean side is to your face, taking care to avoid touching face or eyes.
3. Perform hand hygiene with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer

DO NOT pull the mask off your face around your neck to drink, this will lead to contamination.

13. Are staff expected to go outside of the clinic premises to eat or are they allowed to take off their masks to eat while on clinic premises?

Staff can take off their masks to eat and drink when they are on premises in a location where they can maintain a distance of 6 feet from others. It is preferable to minimize going outside to the extent possible to prevent the need to discard masks and to help SCCA preserve mask supplies.

14. Can staff gather in break rooms and other places to eat and relax, and if so, should they leave their masks on?

Staff should adhere to the same principles of physical distancing when together in break rooms, conference rooms or other spaces. They should allow 6 feet distance from others and should take the appropriate precautions involving hand hygiene and not touching their faces. Masks can be taken off in such areas for eating and drinking. It is crucial keep the number of people in a break room limited, so managers and staff should consider staggering their break times to avoid crowding.

15. “I spilled something on my mask” “My mask is soiled” “The ear loop of my mask broke”, etc.

Staff whose mask becomes soiled after continuous usage during the day can request a new mask from their manager. Be cautious with your mask to help SCCA preserve mask supplies.

16. If I need to leave the facility and come back later in my shift, what should I do?

Every effort should be made to limit exit and entry to the facility during your shift to preserve supplies of face masks. If you leave the facility, the face mask must be discarded and a new one obtained upon re-entry. You are strongly encouraged to use your own homemade/cloth face mask when outside of the facility and within 6 feet of another person.

17. Should employees be wearing the mask at home and should their families wear masks?

Employees should discard their procedure masks when leaving at the end of their shift and perform hand hygiene after removing their mask. They should not wear them home. Employees and their families must wear cloth face masks/ coverings outside of the SCCA.

Governor Inslee's statewide order requires people wear cloth face coverings when they are in public settings where they cannot maintain 6 feet of distance from others. This might include trips to the grocery store, pharmacy, hardware store, health clinic or similar places.

18. Can I wear my mask out of the clinic and use it on the bus or if I am going to a place where there will be other people?

NO. The mask needs to be discarded as you are leaving the clinic. It should not be worn on public transportation or in other places outside the clinic. As noted above, Governor Inslee's statewide order requires wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where physical distancing measures are difficult to maintain.